A Treatise OF HUMANE REASON.

By

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A TREATISE OF Humane Reason.

BEing resolv'd, according to the duty of every private Person, to make a search into the nature and quality of my Religion; and according to my interest in Humane Society, to communicate the effects of that search

to others, if I ſhall believe it profitable for them: I am in the firſt place to conſider of the choice of ſome Guide, for ſo long and ſo dangerous a journey, where I ſhall ſometimes meet with no tract or Path at all, and ſometimes with ſo many, and thoſe ſo contrary in the appearance of their firſt entry, that the variety will confound me more then the want; eſpecially there being ſo many miſts caſt before me by the errours and deceits of others, that one had great need of a better Eye-ſight than is left us by the fall of our firſt Fore-father. And this conſideration after a long and Serious debate thereof, brings no other Guide to me but my own *Reaſon*, which if it take ſuch directions as it ought and may do, before it ſets forth, and purſue thoſe

directions

directions with care and constancy, though it may possibly lead me into errours, yet will bring me at last even through them, to the propos'd end of my journey, which is *Happiness*.

I am not ignorant of the many Enemies I must meet with in this doctrine, but am fortified against them with the thought that they who dispute most against the power and priviledges of Humane reason, do it because their own Reason perswades them to that belief; and so whether the Victory be o'mine, or o'their side, are equally defeated. They seek to terrifie us with the example of many excellent Wits, who, they say, by following this *Ignis fatuus* (for so they call the onely *North-Star* which God has given us for the right Steering of our course) have

fallen into wild and ridiculous Opinions, and encreased the catalogue of Heresies to so vast a number: But truly these men either followed not their own reason, but made it follow their will, or hudwinkt it first by interests and prejudices, and then bad it shew them the way; or were wanting in those necessary diligences which are required for so doubtful and dangerous a passage: Or if, without the commission of any of these faults, the weakness of their understanding has deceiv'd them, the error is neither hurtful to themselves, nor would be to others, if this doctrine of governing our selves from within, and not by example, were establisht. Whereas on the contrary side, the submitting our judgments to Authority, or any thing else

else whatsoever, gives universality and perpetuity to every error.

They fall naturally from hence into the large common-place of the frailty, uncertainty and disproportion of our understanding to divine and celestial notions, and are eloquent herein with much of truth. For when we say that every mans Soul hath in it self as much light as is requisite for our travel towards Heaven, we do not therefore assume, that it is as clear as those spirits which are confessed to be all a Flame. And for the unaptness of it to receive the impression of Spiritual truths; though the *what* and the *How* of religious Mysteries be out of sight, yet that they are such, is sufficiently visible. Especially if we use those helps which God has prepared for us to that pur-

pose, and those our Reason will dictate to her self that she is to use. The ordinary saying of *Democritus*, that *Truth lyes in the bottom of a deep Well*, is very applicable to this matter: that is, that we must seek it in the center and heart of our selves, and not look up into Heaven first and immediately for it; because by this meanes we shall see Heaven in the bottom of the Well, though we could not the Well in the top of Heaven.

But the chief and most Tragicall argument against us is, that the allowance of this Liberty to particular mens discourses, would beget as many religions as there are several persons; and consequently draw after it, disorder and confusion, as is inconsistent not onely with the quiet, but the very being

ing of Humane Society. This is a weighty and grievous accuſation, and if our Reaſon be convinced of ſo harmful a Madneſs, it will be found neceſſary to keep it chain'd and fetter'd, and as much in the dark as may be. But I hope it will acquit it ſelf. Who knows not that the Philoſophy of the Ancients ſeperated it ſelf into ſundry parties; the Pythagorians, the Peripateticks, the Stoicks, the Scepticks, the Academicks (and theſe of three ſorts) the Epicureans, the Cynicks, with many others; and theſe differ'd not in ſlight and verbal controverſies, but in the laſt ends of humane actions, in the nature of good and evil, nay of God himſelf; whether man worked freely or were compelled by an inevitable neceſſity; whether the ſoul were

were subject to Corruption, or immaterial and immortal? Whether the World had a beginning, or had endured from all eternity? Whether the Gods took upon them the Government of things below, or sate as idle themselves in Heaven as their Images were here on Earth? with divers other Questions of equal consequence. These opinions divided the Philosophers, and the Philosophers the People; nor were there fewer Sects in *Athens*, than are now in *Amsterdam* or *London*. And yet this variety of Opinion neither begat any Civil War in *Greece*, neither did the Peripateticks (when both by the strength of their Arguments and their Emperour, that Party was become the greatest) set up any Inquisition, or High Commission or Committee against

againſt the reſt; but every man enjoyed his Opinion with more ſafety and freedom, than either his Goods or Wife. The ſame likewiſe happened in the Religions of the Ancients; for though ſeveral Cities profeſs'd the worſhip of ſeveral Deities, yet we read not of any War which hath ſprung from that diverſity. The Poets have made the Gods enter into factions and quarrels for Commonwealths, but Commonwealths never did the ſame for their Gods. This quiet and happineſs, which (to the ſhame and ſcandal of the Chriſtian Name) was enjoyed four thouſand years among the Heathen, continued ſo long and ſo uninterupted, becauſe every Man, following the rules of his own Judgment, allowed that Liberty to others, which

he

he found so necessary for himself. And even the Stoicks themselves, who enslaved the Will, durst never attempt this violence to the Understanding.

From whence then shall we say it proceeds, that since the Reformation open'd a way to this Freedom of Conscience, so much Blood and Confusion, and almost Desolation, has followed in all those Countries which admitted it. *Germany*, *France*, the *Low-Countries*, and *Scotland* are sufficient witnesses of this; and I could wish that miserable *England* had not been added to the number of these sad Examples. But certainly, since this Liberty has been so many Ages exercised, without drawing after it those Inconveniencies which we now so justly complain of, they must

must be attributed either wholly to some other cause, or to the conjunction of some other Accidents to it, which have changed the nature and condition thereof: And that (having examined all particulars which touch upon this matter) I can find to be no other, than the strange and uncharitable Pride of those men, who having with just cause vindicated their own Reason from the tyranny of unnecessary bonds, endeavour nevertheless to lay them upon others; so that not the use of such Liberty, but the appropriating of it to our selves only, is the true, and, I think, the sole fountain of these Disorders: for there cannot certainly in the World be found out, so mild and so peaceable a Doctrine, as that which permits a

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difference in Beliefs; for what occaſion can any man take to begin a quarrel, when both he himſelf is ſuffered quietly to enjoy his own Opinion, and his own opinion is this, that he ought to ſuffer others to do the ſame. But if once men entertain an imagination, that every thing is wicked and damnable which complies not with their own ſenſe, and that in this vaſt latitude of probabilities (which is in all kind of diſquiſitions, but eſpecially thoſe of Religion, they being moſt obſcure and moſt indemonſtrable) there is none can lead one to ſalvation; but the path wherein he treads himſelf, we may ſee the evident and neceſſary conſequence of eternal troubles and confuſions. For not only publick Charity will perſwade us to force

Men

Men to that wherein consists their everlasting happiness or calamity, if by no other means we can induce men to it (as without injury we bind the hands of a man that would kill himself) but also our private interest, and that particular care, which every man owes to his own Posterity, which, without suppression of all Heresies, must run the hazard of eternal punishments, obliges us, by all means, to endeavour the extirpation of those weeds out of the fields of our Neighbours, which would else so quickly overgrow our own: whereas if we had either more of Charity to others, to believe some Errours (the inseparable Companions of Humane Nature) ought not to exclude men from the Communion of the present Church, and

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the hope of the future; or less of self-flattery to think, that all men grope in the dark that light not their Candle at ours, we could not be so cruel in persecution of those faults, to which God himself is so merciful, and from which we our selves are not exempt. I shall therefore conclude this Argument with a confident assertion, That all the miseries which have followed the variety of Opinions since the Reformation, have proceeded entirely from these two mistakes, The tying *infallibility* to whatsoever we think Truth, and *damnation* to whatsoever we think Errour.

Another absurdity this Doctrine is accused of, that if we guide our selves wholly by the light of Reason, we shall not only every one differ

differ from every body elſe, but every one frequently from himſelf, changing Religion almoſt as often as our Habits, driven about perpetually by every wind, and in all probability daſht by ſome one at laſt againſt a rock; now a *Papiſt*, to morrow a *Lutheran*, next a *Calviniſt*; and ſo like the *Heathen*, dedicate every day in the week to a ſeveral Deity. I muſt confeſs, Inconſtancy is one of the greateſt weakneſſes of the weakeſt Sex, and much leſs to be endured in Man, eſpecially in that moſt weighty affair of his whole life, the ſervice of God; but I cannot conceive, that the fear of this ſcandal obliges us to a blind and inalterable obſervance of thoſe Laws and Opinions, which either the fate of our birth and education, or the fortune

tune of other accidents have engaged us in; but we ought to make a ſerious and long enquiry, whether they agree moſt with that light of our Underſtanding, which God has infuſed into us for that end, according to the beſt extent of thoſe means, which are allowed by him to our underſtandings for this examination; and whatſoever we ſhall fix upon after this conſideration, if it be duly made, will be upon ſuch grounds, as are not likely every day, and upon every new argument to be removed from us: for if they be, it is a great, though not an infallible ſign, that the enquiry was not made at firſt with ſo much diligence as was poſſible: And when we have once carefully ſetled our ſelves in a belief, though we happen to meet

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afterwards with some new and unforeseen difficulties, which may seem to evince the contrary, yet Reason will not presently advise us to a change, because it finds it self unable to unty the knot, but suspend a while and attempt again, and try a thousand several wayes, before it despair and yield up it self to the argument; which remaining still after all this unconquerable, it will then turn back and consider whether if it alter now its judgment, it be able to satisfie all those defences which will be made for its former opinion, and if it be overmatch'd by the doubts on both sides, rather chuse to continue as before, then make an innovation without advantage. This Rule being observ'd, we shall not be subject to the inconvenience of frequent

quent changes, and yet as true it is, that we ſhall not be exempt from the poſſibility of changing at all, which is neither requiſite nor attainable in this life; and if in this permutation, after all our induſtry and humility therein, it ſhall be our ill fortune to give away a truth for a falſe-hood, it will be (as killing a man againſt our will is no murther) at the worſt but an error by chance-medley, and will both find (I had almoſt ſaid claim) mercy from God, and deſerve pity from men. We know very well that every mans body is in ſo perpetual a flux, that about the ſpace of ſeven years, renders him wholy and entirely another corporeal ſubſtance from what he was before, the whole maſs both of accidents and matter being thruſt away by the continual

ſucceſſion

ſucceſſion of new ones: and yet becauſe the ſoul remains ſtill the ſame, and retains all the while the ſame power and uninterrupted government over the whole ſucceſſion, we juſtly eſteem it the ſame perſon; nay every part of him to be always ſo truely the ſame, that at any time of his life he may ſay, with theſe Eyes I ſhall behold my Saviour, though the accidents and very matter of them be ſo often changed. Such an Identity as this is requiſite to a mans Faith: he may now be fully a Papiſt, and ſeven years hence fully a Proteſtant, and yet his faith ſtill remains the ſame, becauſe it is all the while actuated and moved by the ſame ſoul of faith, which is conſcience; which if he preſerve inviolably, both when he was a Papiſt, and when he is a Proteſtant,

teſtant, he may truly ſay, with this very faith I ſhall behold my Saviour.

But ſuppoſe this ſo exalted Guide of yours, your own Conſcience, ſhould direct you to forſake your Chriſtian-belief? for which the Devil do's not want ſuch pleaſant colours and ſpecious fallacies, as may poſſibly deceive even a good underſtanding.

Before I anſwer this Objection, I deſire to know of him that makes it, what it is (for ſomething it muſt be) which he places in the ſame Eccleſiaſtical Superiority that I do reaſon? The private Spirit? what if that ſhould perſwade him to this Apoſtacy? It cannot. Not indeed if it be true; but the ſame condition will make Reaſon as infallible as that; and I may as well judg

judg of the truth of the one, as you of the other.

What is it then you will truſt your Soul with, in this important buſineſs? Is it the Authority of Men? Theſe verily may lead you into error, and it is not impoſſible, into the greateſt and worſt of all, which is the deſertion of Chriſt himſelf: not that this is likely to happen, neither more probable is it, that our Reaſon ſhould ſo far miſguide us. But alas! in this affair of ſo vaſt and ſo eternal conſequence, what ſecurity can we aſſume, whilſt there remains a poſſibility of miſcarriage; and this poſſibility is Evident. For let us conſider it in a Council; which if there be any aſſurance in the number of men, is that where moſt probably it may be found. I will

not here reckon up the many errors which great and famous Councils have fallen into themselves, and labour'd to establish in others, they are many and notorious. But certainly if a Council could take away the satisfaction of Christs death, and Divinity of his person (as was done by that great one of the *Arrians* which condemned *Athanasius*, not without the approbation of the Pope and the whole World besides) a Council has already done that thing, which you affirm impossible for it to do. For they who believed Christ to come into the World as an example and pattern onely of Holiness, are no more to be call'd *Christians*, than *Abrahamists* or *Davidists*. If you will here contend, that even these men deserted not wholy Christianity, as

a man may do by the impulsion of his own private Reason, yet certainly you will confess that they who fell so far into error, might as well have sunk deeper, and exalted some other Prophet above Christ, as well as made Christ to be but a Prophet: and this possibility of Errour (even in so high a degree) we shall find in the nature and very Elements of a Council; for if any one Member of it may be a Heathen or Atheist in Opinion (as the lives of many Popes, and the speeches of some, declare that they themselves have been) why not two, not three, not more, not the Major part, that is, the whole Council? From the Sanctions of the 2/7 *Nicene* Council, which establish'd the worship of Images, how easie a step was there made

for the next; to the introduction of a full, undiſguis'd and Heatheniſh Idolatry, which we muſt not ſay could not, becauſe by the mercy of God it did not happen. And I verily believe, if God had not ſtirr'd up ſome perſons of excellent Abilities and worthy Spirits (for ſuch ſure they were, though not exempt from humane weakneſſes) to examine by the Rules of their own Reaſons, thoſe follies and dangerous Errours in Religion, which partly by the Intereſt, partly by the Ignorance of Men, and inſenſible advances of ill Cuſtome, were blindly embraced by the whole World; if theſe Men, I ſay, had not diſcover'd the paſt Errours, and by that means made their Adverſaries more cautious not to fall into any new ones,

ones, the world through the Adoration of Saints and Images, and the boundless Increase of vain and Superstitious Ceremonies, would have past before this time, to its old and abominable worship of several Deities, and to a Religion overwhelm'd, if not with the same, yet with as many and as vain Impieties. It remains therefore, that you put your Confidence rather in the Traditions of the former, than the Commands of the present Church; but what those were, you must either trust some number of Men present, which is not without the possibility of being misguided; or your own search and diligence, which is to fall into that Opinion which you condemn in me. And truly they who build their Belief wholly upon the Authority of

past or present Ages, if they look upon all the Consequences of that Opinion, are in much greater danger of being drawn from the Christian Faith, than those who remit the judgment of these things to their own Reason: For ever since the beginning of the Christian belief, there has been the Authority of above an hundred to one against it; and this Authority backt and strengthened with the universal agreement of more than three thousand years before it. But on the contrary, if we weigh impartially the Motives and Arguments which every Religion can produce in its own defence; Reason it self will find more and much greater for the Christian, than it can for any other Belief whatsoever: And I am very confident, that no man ever

ever from a Christian, became a *Turk* or a *Jew*, because his Reason told him that was a better Religion; but because either fear of punishment or hope of reward, or some other sinister Cause, perswaded his Reason, that the worst Religion in it self, would be the better to him upon those Conditions.

Now all those Arguments by which some men have laboured to prove, that our *Guide* in spiritual matters ought to be *Infallible*, will, though they be granted for true, as I believe in some sense they are, will not at all dispossess Reason of this Authority, which we have declared to be her due. For the *Infallibility* of a Guide I conceive to be only this, That it cannot fail to bring us to that end, for

which we chose to be guided by it; and if to this end there happen to be a thousand several waies, it is a Guide no less infallible as to the End, if it lead us through a long, an unpleasant and obscure Tract, than if it conducted us by a short, a delightful and an open road: for not the goodness of the passage, but certainty of not missing the End, is that which constitutes this kind of *Infallibility*. And truly every mans particular Reason, if well followed (for whatsoever Guide you pitch upon, whether Scripture, Spirit, Church past or present, or any thing else imaginable, must have that condition annext, or else it will become unprofitable) will infallibly carry him at last, though perhaps through many tedious and troublesome wandrings, to his eter-

eternal happineſs, if it be followed (for that condition cannot be repeated too often) with conſtancy, diligence and ſobriety.

This Doctrine ſets the great gate of Heaven ſo wide open, that it will diſpleaſe thoſe men, who with an envious kind of pride think it more honour to enter in with a few at a narrow wicket. But I truly, out of an humble conſideration of my own weakneſs, and the general imbecillity of humane nature, ſhould ſtill lament and tremble, that the entrances to Heaven are ſo few and ſo difficult, though they were yet far more and much eaſier than this opinion makes them. There are enow obſtructions from the frailty of our Fleſh, the ſubtilty of the Devil, the tyranny of our Paſſions, and

the perverſe crookedneſs of our corrupted Wills, without the additions of any more from the imperfections of our intellect. Sufficient is the danger we run, in not performing thoſe Duties which we underſtand aright, without making our miſ-underſtandings damnable, and condemning that as a Guilt, which is to be pitied as a misfortune. What then? ſhall we believe *Turks*, *Jews*, *Heathens*, *Atheiſts* themſelves (if there be any ſuch) in an equal poſſibility of ſalvation, with the unerring Chriſtian? Shall we ſave all Beaſts of what kind ſoever, clean or unclean, in that myſtical Ark the Church of God? Certainly in the two contrary exceſſes of belief in this matter, that on the ſide of Mercy hath the appearance of greater

greater ſafety; and I had rather think with *Origen*, *That the Devils themſelves, by the exceſſive kindneſs of their Judge, ſhall at laſt be exempted from damnation, than that he himſelf ſhall be damn'd for that Opinion.* But as to this their Objection; I believe firſt, That Reaſon it ſelf will declare to every Man in the World, that he ought to adhere to the *Chriſtian*, rather than to any other Religion whatſoever, if all things be propounded to him in a clear and impartial manner: and this whoſoever ſhall deny, I dare confidently affirm, it is impoſſible for him to be a Chriſtian. But becauſe there are thouſand accidents, which hinder the greateſt part of the world from the advantages of ſo fair a propoſal, hence it comes to

paſs,

paſs, that ſo ſmall a part of Mankind hath ſubmitted to the Obedience of the Chriſtian Faith: Now to condemn all thoſe Millions of perſons (many millions for one that is to be ſaved) is ſo wild an uncharitableneſs, that few have been ſo barbarouſly ſevere, as to be guilty of it: and therefore thoſe whoſe Ignorance in theſe matters hath been invincible, they left to the hands of God, without declaring a definitive opinion either of their ſafety or perdition. Now if we conſider rightly, what Ignorance is to be accounted invincible, we ſhall by this means reſtore the greateſt part of Mankind into a hopeful and comfortable condition; and none even amongſt the worſt Religions, will be left to a certain ruine, but ſuch whoſe Con-

Conſciences have been neglected or forced aſide by thoſe who ought to have been guided by them; and ſuch who can have no plea againſt the rigour of their ſentence, becauſe they deſerted themſelves as well as God: And the diſobedience of Men to their own Conſcience is not only in things of practice, but alſo of belief and ſpeculation, though not in ſo evident and immediate a manner, by ſuffering themſelves to be deceived by the inſenſible operations of intereſt and prejudice.

Nor does it follow from hence, that Chriſt is not the only ſource and cauſe of eternal felicity; for I acknowledge there is no other Name under heaven by which men can hope for ſalvation.

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But I may very well believe withal, that there are secret and wonderful waies, by which God may be pleased to apply his Merits to mankind, besides those direct, open, and ordinary ones of *Baptism* and *Confession*: which I have only advanc'd briefly in this place, being a matter that will require a more ample and particular examination. Now concerning the Salvation of all sorts of Christians, except their lives disagree from their doctrines (which is likewise a disobedience to their Reasons) I know not why I should be terrifi'd out of my Charity by any *Anathema* whatsoever that shall proceed from the mouth of Man. For I cannot see how any but God himself can certainly know that

that any man is an Heretick, ſince it is only he who can diſcern by what cloſe and unlawful means he corrupts his underſtanding, and hardens his own will to the obſtinate belief of any Errour; for without that obſtinacy there is no Hereſie, and without the perfect ſight of the whole contexture of a mans Thoughts and Actions, there is no knowledge of ſuch an obſtinacy: and therefore when the Church declares any Opinion to be Hereſie, it is to be accepted as if the Law ſhould ſay, *whoſoever kills a man is a Murtherer*, which is a ſentence not abſolute but to be qualified with Circumſtances: even ſo the Church pronounces, *whoſoever holds this Doctrine is an Heretick*, with an evident reſervation of ſome

ſome Circumſtances in the meaning thereof, for no man can imagine that the ſentence includes thoſe who never ſhall hear of it; nor no more, ſay I, thoſe, who though they hear of it, yet cannot by any means bring their Conſcience to the aſſent. For to obey in matters of belief, without being able to believe the thing commanded, is no leſs, and ſeems more a contradiction, than ſimply to obey without knowledge of a Command.

Thus much briefly concerning *Hereſie*, which indeed is a Subject worthy a Treatiſe by it ſelf. But this will not ſuffice, unleſs we can alſo clear our ſelves from the imputation of *Schiſme*, the ordinary railing word in all Controverſies, and a ſlander which is

is often fatal in making, where it falſly accuſes a ſeparation: of which they are truly guilty (the word it ſelf bearing witneſs againſt them) who break the precious unity of the Chriſtian Church; but that is done not ſo much by them who differ in Opinions, as by them who will not allow of ſuch a difference. Who knows, whether that God who liked beſt that no mens Bodies ſhould have the ſame complexion, no mens Faces the ſame figures, no Hands the ſame lines, no Voices the ſame ſounds, nay not ſo much but their motions and geſtures ſhould be diſtinguiſhable, has not likewiſe beſt pleaſed himſelf with no leſs variety in the parts of Men that are immaterial, and even in the moſt imma-

immaterial Actions of those parts, which is the worship and adoration of a Deity? Does God gain any thing by our devotions? does he receive hurt from one kind of worship, and advantage by another? is he pleased with any smell in the sacrifice besides that of Obedience? and can a plain uniform, unalterable obedience be expected, without Commands of the same nature? Without doubt, he who gave Rules which might accept of so many several interpretations, when he might have made them as plain to all in one sense, as they seem now to every man in his own, is likewise well contented, that they shall be interpreted severally: and as the Divines confess, that the same words of Scripture admit

mit of a Literal, Typical, Anagogical ſenſe, and that all thoſe ſenſes are both true and intended by the Holy Ghoſt, that Spirit of unity that writ them; ſo, I ſay, the Commands of God concerning Religion are equally obeyed and fulfilled by all the various kinds of Obedience, which the Conſciences of men conceive themſelves bound to pay unto them: As well the Mud by growing hard, as the Wax by melting obeys the Sun; nor is it leſs glorified by one than by the other: nor are thoſe diverſities of powers in the Sun, but of capabilities in the object that receives him: even ſo Faith is ſtill properly one, though according to the diverſe receptions of it, it produce not only diverſe

diverse but contrary effects. It is not unobservable, that the Unity of the Church of God is compared not to the unity of one Man, but of a Man and Woman joyned in Marriage; so the *Church* in general is one with *Christ*; so the *Church Militant* with the *Triumphant*; and so every *particular man* with the *Church militant*: Now this *Unity* is of one part more weak, more infirm, more ignoble than the other; and the *Female part* in the similitude, is the erring part in the Church it self; and as that by the bond of *Love*, so this by the bond of *Charity* is to be accounted one and the same with the other. Can any thing be more irrational, than to say that a foot when it hath the Gout,

Gout, or a hand when it ſhakes with the Palſey, or a Head when it akes, ceaſes to be a part of the body? Sound or ſick, great or little, well or ill ſhaped, are outward conſiderations to the nature of a Member; if it be informed by the ſame Soul, it requires no other condition to make it ſuch: Nor can you make this Soul which is required of ſuch neceſſity to give it life, to be a full and entire agreement in all points of Faith, of one member with another; for then in matters of Belief you make no diſtinction betwixt ſickneſs and death, and the leaſt indiſpoſition of health is a total Corruption. Men of the contrary Opinion (I foreſee) cannot chuſe but ſay here, that

that in dangerous and infectious diſeaſes cut off the affected member to ſave the reſt; and that he who in a Gangreen ſpares the Patient, is the moſt hard-hearted and unmerciful Phyſician: and truly, if Errours in belief draw ſo ill a tail after them as the Devils and Damnation; if they be to be eſteemed Gangreens, as well in reſpect of their mortality, as their ſpreading and infectious Nature; not only Prudence but Charity it ſelf will put a ſword into our hands to cut them off. But alas! theſe diſeaſes are not ſo deadly, as the Phyſicians of the Soul would make them for the exalting of their own reputation; and he that would preſently lop off an arm, if the Gangreen be moving in

in it, would not, I hope, preſcribe the ſame remedy, if it be but infected with an Itch: both Evils would extend themſelves over the whole body, but the one to the perpetual deſtruction of the being, the other only to the temporary loſs of the beauty and quiet of it: and therefore we rather patiently endure the trouble and vexation of continual ſcratching (which is the true Metaphor for the Controverſies of Eccleſiaſtical Writers) with the loathſomneſs and deformity of ſo many ſores, than take away a Member which may poſſibly hereafter recover its former health and comelineſs, and is even now without them, of great and neceſſary uſes to the whole body.

Now

Now as for those men, who accuse us of pride and vanity for attributing so much to our own Reason, making presumption and self-flattery the fountain of this Opinion; it is a scandal so false and so ridiculous, that without much humility I should disdain to answer it. Are those to be accounted proud and tyrannical, who being governed by their own Reason, are content that all others should enjoy the same liberty, or those who whilst they deny that they themselves are ruled by their own understandings, would nevertheless have all others to submit to it? Is it the voice of Pride to acknowledge, that they who differ from me may possibly be in the right, or if they mistake may do it

it without ruine, or to say, Whosoever is not of my Opinion is in the wrong, and whosoever is in the wrong is eternally to perish for his Errour? Is it the custome of Presumption to be ready to lay down an Opinion once entertained (which is almost as great a Martyrdom, as laying down our lives for the Truths sake) when cause shall appear for so doing, or by claiming to our selves the infallibility of our Party (for he is infallible himself who agrees with them that are so) to harden our selves into a necessary Opiniastrete.

These are the common Objections against this good-natur'd and gentle Doctrine: But Mr. *Hobbs*, according to his extra-

ordinary wit, has found out an odd, and extraordinary Argument. For in his first Chapter of Religion, in the state of Gods natural Empire, making every City the supream Judge in matters that belong to Gods worship, and to which we ought to render an entire obedience, saies thus: "Otherwise all absurd Opinions of the Nature "of God, and all ridiculous "Ceremonies which have been "admitted by any Nations, "would be seen at once in the "same City, by which it would "happen, that every particular "person would believe all others to "*blaspheme, or irreverently to behave himself "towards God; so that it could be

*Contumelia afficere.

"be said of no man, that he "worship'd God, because no "man worships God (that is, "honours him externally) but "he who does those things by "which he may appear to others "to honour him.

But methinks, if this be true, the several unappealable Tribunals which are set up by Mr. *Hobbs* in several Cities or Commonwealths, are as well destroyed by it, as those which are placed by us in every Mans breast; for several Cities appointing several kinds of worship or honour, consisting in the Opinion not of the worshipper or honourer himself, but of the witnesses and spectators of the worship or honour; now if he say, that when a whole Com-

monwealth has but one ſort of worſhip, none will be witneſſes or ſpectatours of it, but thoſe who believe it honourable; firſt, as much ſcandal from the report, as from the ſight of it; and beſides, the ſame I ſay will happen, if there were an hundred Religions in one City; for ſtill their Religious Congregations were to be made up of men of the ſame Opinions: Again, Thoſe who deny that a Commonwealth ought to enforce an unity of Worſhip upon all its Subjects, will likewiſe as much deny, that men ought to think thoſe Worſhips diſhonourable which are not practiſed by themſelves: and if he ſay, there is no hindering of this latter, he muſt needs pardon me

if

if I cannot believe that impoſſible, which has been in the world (even in a more ridiculous variety than is at preſent, at leaſt in our parts) for ſo many Ages, and which is now exerciſed in ſome places: And if ignorant or malicious Phyſicians in this violent Feavour, did not apply new heats inſtead of Julips, they might by Writing, Diſputing, Preaching, living Charitably (which is all the former) reduce the world in a ſhort time to its ancient healthful and natural temper. Laſtly (to ſtrike at the root of this Argument) it is falſe, that the worſhip or honour of God conſiſts in the opinion of others; if it did, Idolatry for four thouſand years, had been the

beſt, nay the only Religion; and if I were now in the South Continent (where I ſuppoſe I ſhould be the only Chriſtian) I ought not to abſtain from the Chriſtian worſhip of God (no, nor to hide or diſguiſe it) for fear leaſt the wonder, contempt and mockery of Infidels, ſhould on a ſudden (I know not how) convert it into ſin and blaſphemy. True it is that in honour paid from Men to Men, cuſtome, conſent, and acknowledgment, makes up the buſineſs, and an honour contrary to the uſe of the place is counted an affront; as to put off the Hat would be in the Eaſt, and in the Weſt to keep it on before Princes. But the reaſon of this is, becauſe men who are not able to ſearch into

into the hearts, muſt be govern'd in their judgment of them by the exteriour actions, and the meaſure or ſtandard of thoſe is Cuſtome; but with God it is quite otherwiſe: He beholds and judges the very thoughts of man, which are the fountains of his actions, ſo much more fully and plainly, than we do the actions themſelves, that he needs not make a ſecond, a mediate, a ſyllogiſtical judgment of the reality of mens worſhip, from the external, circumſtantial, and onely probable teſtimonies of their outward behaviours. And truly if we put the caſe amongſt Men, methinks a great *Roman* Emperour that calls himſelf Maſter of the world, ſhould delight to prove himſelf to be ſo,

from the variety of homages, tribute and worſhip, which he receives from ſeveral Nations; and no more refuſe to be honour'd in ſeveral faſhions, than he would to be prais'd in ſeveral Languages. He would be glad perhaps to eſtabliſh the *Latine* Tongue, and make that the Speech of all Countries, but finding that deſign to be impoſſible, would at leaſt pardon that diverſity which agrees and conſents in his own glory. Truly if men could caſt away ſo much paſſion, as to make but true Compariſons, they would find no more hurt from the uſe of different Ceremonies, then of different Tongues in the ſame City; and we might be as well allowed to ſerve God after the

Engliſh

Engliſh manner, as to ſpeak *Engliſh* in the *Spaniſh* Dominions. As words are the images of our thoughts, ſo our thoughts are of the things themſelves: and as well may differing thoughts truly repreſent the worſhip of one God, and of his Son Chriſt Jeſus, as differing words can repreſent the ſame thought: And this the *Roman* Church ſeems to acknowledge, which does not think ſufficient Unity in Gods Service to be retain'd, with the allowance of more than of one Language, and for preſervation of Fantaſtical Identity, teaches her Sons firſt to think, and afterwards to ſpeak they know not what. They ſay firſt, Our errour is the ſame with that of the *Greeks*, which

is taxed by Saint *Paul* to the *Corinthians*; That they *sought after wisdom*, but *that the world by wisdom knew not God*; that *the wisdom of the wise was destroyed, and the understanding of the prudent brought to nothing*; that it *was made foolishness*, nay it *was confounded by the foolish things of the world.* And against this wisdom, many excellent things are spoken in the beginning of that Epistle, and it is strucken down (as Saint *Paul* was himself) by a greater light of Divine truth, which came from God for that very purpose, to amaze and confound it first, and then to convert it. But if we mark it well, we shall observe, that under this name of *Wisdom*, which is arraigned, condemned,

demned, nay and executed here (for it is brought to nothing) is not signified *Humane Reason*, but that which among the *Greeks* at that time was falsly and blindly esteemed to be so: As in the Laws against Magick, not that which is truly, but that which is falsly called so, is only condemned. And therefore Saint *Paul* names it the *wisdom of words*; *the enticing words of mans wisdom*; and the *wisdom after the flesh*; and the *wisdom of the Princes of the world*. By which three names are plainly (methinks) described, the three great suborners and corrupters of Humane Reason (and not at all it self) the desire of Reputation, of Pleasure, and Profit. By the first we forsake the Truth

to

to make demonſtrations of our wit and eloquence: By the ſecond to compaſs thoſe carnal and worldly pleaſures, which our own true Reaſon does not allow of, and therefore we will not allow of it: (as *Henry* the *Eight* ſeems to have left the Pope, becauſe he refuſed to diſpence with his luſts, and to call that Matrimony, which was indeed Adultery:) And by the third, to comply with the intereſt of States and Princes, and either willingly deceiving our ſelves with the errours of our Governours, or deceiving others with a deſire to Govern them. And theſe three (at leaſt the two latter) cauſes of errour in the underſtanding, may be the Reaſon contained with truth

in

in the parable concerning which is ſtrongeſt. That that which falſly ſeemed to be *Humane Reaſon*, and not that which truly is ſo, is accuſed by Saint *Paul*, appears yet more plainly, where he ſays, that *God hath choſen the things which are not, to confound the things which are:* where *the things which are not* can ſignifie nothing elſe, but the things which are eſteemed as nothing, that is neither of value in themſelves, nor of power to produce any effects. True it is, that the beſt and trueſt *Humane Reaſon* could not have found out of it ſelf, that *wiſdom of God in a myſtery, even that hidden wiſdom which God ordained before the world*, which is the myſtery of *Chriſt Jeſus*; but it was neceſſary

neceſſary it ſhould firſt be revealed by that Spirit, which can only ſearch and diſcover the deep things of God. But as ſoon as the Spirit had reveal'd it (which it did by Miracles, by fulfi'ling of Prophecies and many other means of power and demonſtration) even Humane Reaſon was able to behold and to confeſs it; not that *Grace* had alter'd the Eye-ſight of Humane Reaſon, but that it had drawn the object nearer to it. And till the object was brought ſo nigh, the wiſdom of man did as ſafely not diſcern it, as it does not now the new ſtate of things, which ſhall be revealed at the Second coming. And whereas they oppoſe againſt this the ſaying of the Apoſtle, that *the Natural*

man

man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discern'd: The word *Natural*, I take to be a very ill translation, and conceive it ought to be rendred the *sensual man*, for such ψυχικὸς in the *Greek*, and *Animalis* in the *Latine*; ψυχὴ many times signifying the *lower* and *sensitive* part of the Soul, in distinction to νοῦς, which is the *upper* or *rational*, as *anima* is oppos'd to *Animus*, and both sometimes to *Mens*. So that the meaning is, that whilst a mans Reason is seduced by his appetites and passions, it is an unfit Judge of Spiritual matters, neither can be Umpire for a peace, having joyn'd it self to the Party

of

of thoſe things, which are in perpetual warfare againſt the Spirit. But they ſay this *authority* which we aſcribe to Reaſon, is ſtrangly different from that *Captivity* which Saint *Paul* ſubjects it to, when he ſays, *Caſting down reaſonings, and every high thing that exalts it ſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and bringing into Captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt.* And what Captivity, ſay they, can there be, whilſt we are only guided by the motions of our own underſtanding? All which ſignifies no more, but that St. *Paul* relates (in vindication of his own juſt greatneſs againſt the Calumnies of ſome that deſpiſed his perſon, eſpecially as weak and rude of ſpeech) how he had confuted thoſe

thoſe perſons that oppoſed themſelves by reaſonings againſt the Doctrine of Chriſt; and whereas their underſtandings before were enſlaved and captivated to the deſires of the ſenſual Soul (for which he calls them in another place *beaſts at Epheſus*) which hindred them from the obedience of Chriſt, he freed them from their cruel bondage, by caſting down all their ſtrong holds, and breaking the chains of their fallacious reaſonings, and brought them into another captivity by right of conqueſt, but ſuch an one where the yoaks are light and the burthens eaſie, that is, by true reaſon he overcame and captivated their falſe ones.

And

And from this Example, I desire those who would have our Understandings captivated, to convince us first by theirs that they ought to be so, and not to think to enslave our Reasons, till they first overcome them: which when they have done, then they will lose what they contend for: For by our Reasons being guided, conquered, and enslaved, theirs are become Guides, Conquerours, and Masters. So that it will appear at last impossible for humane Reason to lose any thing in one place, without gaining as much in some other.

B They who follow the apprehension of a Vision or Revelation extrinsecally coming into their Souls, if it happen that that extrin-

trinsecal light come from the *Father of Lights*, as the pillar of Fire did which led the *Israelites*, they must needs be guided rightly; but if it chance to be an *Ignis fatuus* (a flame driven about, as men commonly believe, by malicious Spirits) the Errours which it leads them into become unpardonable; for what plea can they make for mercy, since there is no command, nor no counsel can be alleadged for the trusting of themselves to that Stranger, which they can neither know from whence he comes, nor whither he designs to go. The like happens if we obey Authority: For if that Authority prescribe truth, we have good fortune in our obedience, and meerly good fortune: but if

if it draw us into Errours, we have nothing to say for our excuse, because we have nothing to alleadge for our obedience to that Authority: So *Eve* pleaded the Authority of the Serpent, but both were punished: so *Adam* with more appearance of innocency, *the Woman that thou gavest me for an Helper had me eat*, and accordingly I did; but to him too a Curse is pronounced, because he believed that which was figuratively one with him (as members of the Church pretend to do the Church) rather then that which was most certainly and singly one with him, which was his own Reason. Thus the best that can be made of these mens Opinions is, that after they have blind-

blind-folded themſelves, amongſt the many doors where they may enter, there is one which will lead them to Heaven; which if they miſs, it will be asked, not why you entered not there, but why by blinding your own eyes did you put your ſelf into a greater probability of not finding, than of lighting upon the true paſſage. Now contrariwiſe, thoſe who commit themſelves to the guidance of their own underſtanding, if they do commit themſelves *wholly* to it, are as ſafe on the left hand as on the right, as ſecure of happineſs in their Errours, as others are, who are otherwiſe guided, even in the Truths which they happen to fall into. For there is no danger of periſhing but from diſo-

diſobedience, without which every man may often erre, the commandement of God being not to find out truth (eſpecially every particular one) but to endeavour the finding it: He commands no more but to *ſearch*, *and ye ſhall find*, ſays he, not every particular Truth, for experience teaches us that cannot be the interpretation: but whether you find or no the Truth which you ſearch for, you ſhall find the reward of ſearching, which is Happineſs: Now he that bids you ſearch, is cruel and barbarous in his mockery, if he knows you have no power or faculty ſo to ſearch as he commands you: there is therefore in man a natural ability of ſearching ſpiritual Truths, and that

that can be nothing else but his Understanding; neither to any thing else can the command be directed, since all things else are without us, and may serve for helps and directions in our search, but cannot be our search it self: Secondly, because we lay the blasphemous accusation of Injustice upon God, if he punish us for an Errour which we could not avoid; and all Errours are such which we fall into after a full and mature search for the Truth, according to the best means represented to our understanding; so that as the liberty of our Will, and the possibility we have of doing the contrary, makes us suffer justly for evil Actions, so the possibility our understanding had to have dis-

discover'd and entertained the Truth, renders us liable to Condemnation for ill beliefs.

☞ Thirdly, We ought not to believe Errours in Faith to be damnable, because this opinion is so wildly uncharitable, that it strikes out ten thousand Millions out of the Book of Life, for each single Name that it leaves in it: so immeasurably vast (if we consider the whole World and all the Ages of it) is the number of those who have lived and died in great, high, and manifest Errours (manifest I mean to us, for they were not so to them) above those that have been so happy as to find and to embrace the Truth.

☞ Fourthly, We ought not to teach men, that any Errours in belief overthrow our hopes

hopes of salvation, unless we could likewise give them a Catalogue of those Errours which do so; it being confest that all do not, because these must necessarily put all considering Men into a doubt, or rather despair of their own salvation: for what quiet or repose can our Conscience take, whilst we know our selves to be in many Errours (the estate of a Travellour being uncapable of an exemption from them) and believe that some Errours, without knowing which or how many, do exclude men from a possibility of entring into Heaven. Fifthly, Because in this case we cannot know our fault, and therefore have no means of repenting of it: Now God en-

joyning men Repentance and promiſing Pardon thereupon for all ſins whatſoever, preſcribes ſuch a Phyſick as is impoſſible to be taken; for Repentance preſuppoſes knowledge of the Fault, and knowledge of a fault do's not conſiſt with an errour of the underſtanding, for we cannot apprehend the thing ſo, and yet be ſorry that we are
B miſtaken. Sixthly, The great probability and appearance of Truth on all ſides, even the erring ones, ought to make us believe, that God will not puniſh thoſe who erre: if that be probable, which all or moſt men, or many, or the moſt wiſe, or ſome wiſe men receive for Truth: What Doctrine is there, which in the whole compaſs of Reli-

Religions may not paſs for probable, and what cauſe have we to condemn the Underſtanding of any man, in a thing which he is drawn by probabilities to aſſent to. I cannot poſſibly conceive it agreeable to the goodneſs of the Divine Nature, ſo to have hidden and involved, and almoſt diſguiſed the Truth from us, if he had intended to have cenſured the miſſing of it, with ſo heavy a ſentence as that of eternal ruine; eſpecially ſeeing there is but one true Way for one hundred falſe ones, and no certain Mark ſet upon the entry of that one, to diſtinguiſh it from the others. And let this ſuffice to be ſaid upon the firſt Argument, to induce us to commit our ſelves

wholly to our Reason in the search of Divine and Religious Verities, which is drawn from the certainty of safety this way, and the great hazard of it any other.

13 Secondly, As in visible Objects we receive confidently, and rest in the report of the sight, because Nature hath ordained and accommodated it accordingly for that purpose, without appeal from it either to other Sences, or to Revelations, or the Eyes of other men; and as we do the like in all other operations of the Sense, and all other faculties of the Soul; so ought we as entirely and absolutely to resign our Belief to the dictates of our own Understanding

ing in things intelligible, which are as properly and naturally the Object thereof, as things visible are of the Eye-sight; and we might as well say, we will trust our Eyes in green, and white and black, but not in red or yellow Colours, as affirm that our Reason must guide us in the contemp'ation of Nature, the search of Arts, the Government of Publick Societies, and the Regulation of mens Lives as far as the bounds of Morality, but that it is not at all to be followed or obeyed in matters that concern Religion; those too being intelligible Truths, yea the chief, and therefore most to be searcht, and a part of the Understandings object as much or rather more than any other.

Now as the credit of the ſight is not at all to be diſparaged, becauſe ſome men have the Jaundies which paints every thing yellow, ſome look through Blew ſpectacles which repreſent all things to them under the ſame colour, and ſome through divers *mediums* which makes the ſtraight Staff appear crooked, ſome are ſhort-ſighted and take Men for Trees at a diſtance; ſo, I ſay, the miſtakes which Reaſon by accidental diſturbances leads ſome men into, is not a ſufficient Argument for others to refuſe to be guided by it.

If it be objected, that the Sight, though it be ſubject to ſome particular impediments, yet is generally by its own nature much more certain and exact

act in the judgment of Colours, than the understanding can ever be made (even without accidental hinderances) in the knowledge of things Spiritual. I Answer, That if such things be the proper object of such a faculty, we are herein to be govern'd by the dictates of it, without considering whether that faculty be as quick and perfect as God could make it in apprehension of its object: neither ought we to give less trust to our Understanding in supernatural Truths, because it is so much inferiour to that of Angels, than we do to our Eye-sight in things visible, though it be so far short of that of Eagles. Certainly they who remove the cognizance of Divine Truths out of the Court of Reason, take a-

way that which moſt properly and naturally falls under its determination. For when GOD had created all things elſe, he thought the World imperfect as yet, whilſt there was nothing made that could contemplate, thank, and worſhip the Maker of it; and therefore he created Man, and this was the chief end of the production of a Rational Soul, that by it they might conſider the things which they ſaw, and diſcourſe and collect out of them the things which they ſaw not, and both praiſe and love the Maker for and in them both; which is the whole ſubſtance of Religion; for the manners and kinds of doing it are accidental. So then Religion appears to be the principal

pal end of Mans Creation, and therefore as if Horses be made for burthen, they have a natural ability given them wherewith to do it; if Birds to flie, they have a faculty and wings given them for that purpose (because where an end is Natural, the means are so too) so if Religion be the End of Man as he is partaker of a Rational Soul, that reasonable Soul hath some power naturally placed in it for the exercise, judgment and choice of Religion, as far forth as is necessary to his own happiness, that is, to the attaining the end for which he was Created.

In the Third place, This Opinion is not only moſt ſafe and moſt natural for every Man in particular, but likewiſe moſt agreeable to the good and intereſt of Humane Society: for all Wars of late Ages have been either really for Religion, or at leaſt that has been one of the chief pretences; which if it were quite taken away, it would be difficult for thoſe men who diſguiſe their Ambition with it, to draw the People into the miſeries and uncertainties either of a Civil or Forraign War. Now if this Doctrine were generally planted in the minds of Men, both the reality and pretence of fighting for Religion were utterly cancelled; and though turbulent minds would then either find

find or make ſome other occaſion to diſturb their Neighbours, yet the ill would neither be ſo frequent nor ſo cruel as it is at preſent. For who would quarrel for Religion, when this were made the main and general ground of all Religions, *That every Man ought quietly to enjoy his own.* True it is, that unity in Religion would produce the ſame effect; but alas! both Reaſon and Experience teaches us, that the hopes of that are vain and impoſſible; and though a *State* may ſometimes force all its Subjects to ſubmit to an outward uniformity in all things that concern Divine worſhip, yet they muſt know, that every publick diſturbance in the Common-wealth, breaks all thoſe bonds

bonds asunder of dissembled Obedience, and that such compulsions both beget and ripen all Disorders.

Much might be spoken in this matter, but not necessarily here, both because I have said something of it before, in answering this Argument turn'd against this Opinion unhappily; and because the manner of establishing this Liberty in a Commonwealth, will require a Discourse entirely by it self.

The last defence of this Cause, and which indeed needs not the L3 assistance of any other, shall be, because (though men deceive them-

themſelves herein, and as it often happens, know not their own Opinions) it is impoſſible that ever any man ſhould have been, is, or can hereafter be guided by any thing elſe but his own *Reaſon*, as in other things, ſo alſo in matters of Religion; I ſay impoſſible, for whatſoever way we take, we ſhall find that the laſt Anchor to which our Faith holds, the laſt Element into which it is reſolv'd (and therefore it is likewiſe compounded of the ſame) is onely *Reaſon*. For when I ask, why you believe any Myſtery of Faith? you will anſwer perhaps, Becauſe the preſent Church commands you: If I proceed and ask, Why do you believe what the preſent Church

Church commands? you will ſay, Becauſe the former Church teaches the ſame. Why do you believe the former Church? Becauſe God commands you ſo to do. Why do you believe that God commands it? Becauſe you find it in the Scripture. Why do you believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God? Becauſe they were confirmed by Miracles. Why do Miracles confirm that? Becauſe they are works which can proceed from nothing but the abſolute and immediate power of the Deity. Why ſo? Becauſe nothing contrary to, or above the Courſe of Nature, can be done by natural Agents; but Miracles are effects contrary to, or above the Courſe of Nature; there-

therefore they proceed from the Divine Operation. Thus you ſee Faith at laſt reſolv'd into a Syllogiſme, which is the proper work of the Underſtanding. On the other hand, if I demand, Why you do believe that any Miracles were done for the Confirmation of the Faith? Becauſe of the great and many Teſtimonies of the Truth thereof. Why do you believe thoſe Teſtimonies? Becauſe ſo many Perſons in ſo ſeveral times and places, with ſo ſeveral intereſts, could never agree in being deceived, or to deceive. So that you reſt not at all in any Authority, but diſcourſe firſt what may be ſaid for or againſt the validity of it, examine it punctually in all Circumſtances, and

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at last submit to it upon some Syllogisme, which is the onely Law that binds our *Reason*. Two things are to be considered in all Authority, before we obey or believe it; first, The condition and quality of the Persons who Command or Instruct; and secondly, The true interpretation of their Commands or Instructions. For the first, The Persons in Commanding must have a lawful Power derived to them, either from God, Nature, or Custome (which latter depends upon the two former.) And in Instructing, must have either an absolute infallibility, or else at least a probability of not Erring. So that no Authority is obeyable or believeable in it self without farther examination:

tion: no not that of God himſelf; for the ſtrength of Gods Authority depends upon that Syllogiſme, which proves that the nature of God is ſuch, that he can neither deceive nor be deceived. Now all this Examination is purely and entirely the work of our Reaſon by meaſuring a particular and an univerſal. Whatſoever hath ſuch Conditions is to be obeyed or believed; but ſuch Perſon or Perſons hath ſuch Conditions, therefore ſuch Perſon or Perſons are to be obeyed or believed: Neither do's our Reaſon onely preſcribe obedience and belief to us, but alſo ſearches and eſtabliſhes the bounds of both, ſetting up ſome ſolid and apparent Notions, by which we know our

Ne plus ultra. True it is, that ſome men Obey and ſome men Believe without conſidering that they make this diſcourſe; but that is only from inadvertency, as men often move their Bodies, without any particular exerted thought of doing ſo.

Thus far then Authority wholy depends upon *Reaſon*. And much more in the *ſecond Condition*, which is the interpretation of it: in which buſineſs the interpoſition of *Reaſon* is ſo neceſſary, that I ſhall omit either to prove or illuſtrate the Point.

Now as they who enſlave themſelves to Authority, make it the rule and guide of Faith, becauſe that even the belief that Scripture is the Law of God depends

pends upon it, as truly it do's (in my Opinion) upon the tradition of Miracles; ſo I ſay, that much rather *Reaſon* is to be accounted that Rule and that Guide we look for, becauſe even Authority upon which even Scripture it ſelf depends, depends as much upon that; neither do we more believe the Scripture for Authority, then that very Authority for the Reaſon we think we have to do ſo. The *Samaritan* ſays, I have an infallible Rule, which is the *Books of Moſes*, and only them. The *Jew* ſays, I cannot erre for I follow the *Old Teſtament*, which is infallible, and only that. The Chriſtian aſſures himſelf of the Truth as long as he is guided by the

the *Evangeliſts* and *Apoſtles*, whoſe Writings are the infallible dictates of the *Holy Ghoſt*. The *Turk* aſſumes the ſame from the *Alcoran*; and the *Heathen* from *Oracles*, *Sybill's Books*, and the like. What ſhall I do? None of all theſe Books can be believed by their own Light, for there are things equally ſtrange in them all. Follow the Authority of the Church which cannot miſguide you? Moſt willingly: but again the ſame difficulty returns in another habit; for as every one Cries, I follow theſe Books which are *infallible*, ſo he goes on too and ſays, I believe theſe Books to be ſo, becauſe our *Church* and our *Traditions*, which are certainly the beſt Authority, aſſures

assures us that they were written by *Divine inspiration.* Let the *Christian* take heed of saying here, *But my Tradition is more ancient and more Universal*, for in the first the *Jew* will overcome him, and in both the *Heathen.* I must in this diversity of waies either stand still, that is, suspend absolutely from the belief of any Religion (which is almost impossible after the belief that there is a *GOD*) or I must choose out of these. Now Election is a work so proper to Reason, that it cannot be done by any thing else; and therefore to be brought to a necessity of an Election, is to be necessarily brought to submit in matters of Religion

ligion to the determination of our Understanding: So that in matters of Religion wherein there is difference, I chooſe this ſide rather than the other, becauſe my *Reaſon* bids me; and where there is no difference, even there I am wholy guided by my *Reaſon*, becauſe the uncontradicted concurrence of the Parties, makes up a Syllogiſme to perſwade (I ſay to perſwade onely) my Belief. Briefly, I cannot *Believe* but by an act of the *Will*, nor can I *Will* but according to the directions of the *Underſtanding*: ſo that they who ſay they follow Authority, or they follow Divine particular Revelation, or any thing elſe imaginable,

do it, because that agrees with their own Reason, and will quit the Party as soon as it do's otherwise.

The End.